

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 11, 2017
8:30 a.m.
215 Bay Street, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD 21601

I. Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Board Members Present: Judy Bixler, John Booth, Kelly Cox (phone), Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Tracy Johns (phone), Dolores Jones, Harold Klinger, Jeff Schneider, Laura Price, Al Silverstein (phone), Cassandra Vanhooser, and Kimberly Weller

Board Members Absent: Harold Klinger

Recording Secretary: Candace Harris

Visitors: Samuel Shoge, Ryan Snow, Jean Weisman

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the August, October, November and December meeting were presented. John Booth moved that the minutes be accepted as written. Dolores Jones seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

III. Old Business

Letter to Talbot County Council: Ms. Vanhooser told the Board that a committee was formed to draft a letter to the Talbot County Council regarding an increase in the accommodations tax. Ms. Vanhooser and Harold Klinger drafted the letter, and she sent it to Board members. She informed the Board that she also called town officials to inform them of the letter that was being drafted to request a work session. St. Michaels Town Manager Jean Weisman subsequently sent an email to Ms. Vanhooser saying that Ms. Weller had shared that the letter had not been voted on by the Board. Ms. Vanhooser withdrew the letter from the county manager. Chairman Bixler then opened the meeting up for discussion on the raising of the accommodations tax 1%.

Discussion: Ms. Weisman stated that there is really two questions: Do you raise the accommodations tax by 1% and how is the money distributed? After much discussion, Mr. Booth moved to ask the County Council for a work session to address the issue of raising the accommodations tax by 1%. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion, which passed

by unanimous vote. However, Board members could not come to an agreement on how the funds should be distributed. Members agreed to have a work session on Thursday, January 19th to discuss the distribution of the 1% accommodations tax increase. Ms. Vanhooser will draft a new letter to the County Council now requesting a work sessions and will submit a second letter detailing the Board's recommendation.

2015 Numbers:

Ms. Vanhooser distributed the Calendar Year 2015 numbers that she just received from Tourism Economics via the State Office of Tourism Development. Ms. Vanhooser will send the whole report out to the Board today. She stated that it was excellent news, and there was an increase across the board in accommodations tax and overnight numbers are up. Talbot County had \$206 million in tourism industry revenue. A question was asked as to why there is a year delay in this report. Ms. Vanhooser stated that the report costs more than \$100,000, and each county is required to pay for a portion of the study. The current contract with Tourism Economics has expired, and Ms. Vanhooser is on the committee that will choose a new vendor for this report.

IV. New Business

2017 Talbot County Travel Guide: The Department of Economic Development and Tourism has again contracted *Chesapeake Bay* Magazine to sell ads, design, and print the 2017 Talbot County Travel Guide. A total of 50,000 copies will be printed, with 25,000 poly bagged with the magazine and mailed to its approximately 23,000 subscribers. The rest will be delivered to the department for distribution locally, at regional and state visitor centers, and to fulfill the more than 10,000 leads that are generated through advertising each year. A digital version will also be available online.

Tourism Day: Ms. Vanhooser reported that March 3 is Tourism Day in Annapolis. She requested the Board members attend and support tourism in Talbot County.

Economic Development Day: Cassandra and Ryan will be attending.

V. Next Board Meeting

Laura Price is again serving as legislative liaison for MACo and will be unable to attend Wednesday meetings. Board members agreed to change the meeting to accommodate her schedule. The next Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2017

X. Adjournment

Ms. Vanhooser thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, especially those who called in from remote locations. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.